

Key Ideas to change the world impress Lieutenant-Governor



By Brock Weir

It all began with a deep breath.

As Meghan Kereakou asked everyone to breathe in, and then out, she asked them to pause, and consider how so many of us with two healthy lungs take that simple action for granted each and every day.

Another deep breath, another thought.

What if you lost a lung and had only one to rely on?

'You can still live, but your life will be reduced,' she said. 'Our world is losing one of its lungs: the Amazon Rainforest.'

The Pickering College student outlined her ideas to help save the rainforest Thursday in the presence of Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, at My Key Idea, a symposium of great ideas led by local Grade 5 students, which is a key component of Pickering College's Global Leadership Program.

At the ceremony, the Queen's representative presented students with their 'keys,' a symbol of unlocking their future as global leaders as they prepare to enter the Middle School this fall.

My Key Idea was the culmination of more than five months' work where students were tasked to consider a number of very important issues and brainstorm ideas on how to make a difference.

Areas of investigation included global awareness, environmental stewardship, social justice, and understanding the impact of new technologies on our changing world.

Each idea was considered on how they impacted seventeen

sustainable development goals outlined by the United Nations.

Participating Aurora students Winston Cao-Feng, Lindsay Fu and Dylan Powell each delved deep into the topics of the Dangers of Nuclear Waste, the Dangers of Space Debris and Ocean Pollution & Marine Species Loss respectively.

?When many of you visited me at Queen's Park a few months ago, I was so impressed by your knowledge of the sustainable development goals and more,? the Lieutenant-Governor told students, teachers, and parents. ?Today is really about an opportunity for me to follow up and for you to tell me more about your Key Ideas. When I looked through the list of topics, I was impressed to see that you covered so many goals of the seventeen goals, and not only topics that are about environmental stewardship but also topics that relate to social justice. Those are all things that are going to be so important as you grow up and learn to navigate this world.

?As Lieutenant-Governor, I have the great privilege of being all over this province and learning something new every day. Sometimes I think as adults we actually don't pay enough attention to young people. Sometimes the really critical questions ? like one I had over lunch today ? come from young people and I think you bring a special perspective that, in many ways, are much more connected and much more open to new ideas than some of us adults are. I am always listening carefully for those stories.?

Inspiring students to build on the work they have completed through the Global Leadership Program so far, the Lieutenant-Governor shared stories of youth fostering tangible change all over the world, from Indigenous teen Autumn Peltier who has become an influential ?water warrior? representing a number of First Nations, to 16-year-old environmentalist Greta Thunberg of Sweden who has become an internationally-renowned voice in the fight against climate change.

?It is so important that we learn to put each other in other people's shoes and to think about how we are all really connected,? said the Lieutenant-Governor. ?The questions you're asking about, ?Why do we have homelessness in a country and a province as rich as this one is? Why are there so many hungry people in our communities? Why do we see so much garbage? The important thing I understand is, as an outsider, about this Global Leadership Program is it helps all of you understand that every person can make a difference. Sometimes in small ways, sometimes in large ways, but it is all worth doing. I hope you will continue to be curious because we need your energy. I hope you'll share your ideas, because often that's when other people get excited and develop ideas of their own.?